

Pollution a worry in cargo plan

Press-Enterprise

December 18, 2007

By Phil Pitchford

A six-county plan to smooth the movement of imported freight on the region's highways and railroads needs stronger controls on air pollution that otherwise could worsen as a result of increased traffic, a group of Mira Loma residents said Monday.

"We're suspicious," one resident, Colleen Smethers, said at a public meeting at the Jurupa Community Center attended by about a dozen people. "It's going to be a tough sell."

The meeting was designed to gather feedback on the Multi-County Goods Movement Action Plan, which is being drafted by six counties in Southern California, including Riverside and San Bernardino, as well as Caltrans and the Southern California Association of Governments.

The plan is designed to serve as a road map for how the region should deal with increasing numbers of metal containers of imported products that enter the country through the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach and are moved by truck and train through Southern California before reaching the rest of the country.

A consultant who is producing the plan for the public agencies said it is designed to deal with many of the problems raised at the meeting. Sam Morrissey of Wilbur Smith Associates said the government agencies recognize that more attention should be given to how the goods-movement industry's growth could affect communities.

"The project partners hope to address those issues through this process," Morrissey said. "This is a way forward for the region."

Another workshop on the plan is tentatively scheduled for January in San Bernardino. The final version is scheduled for completion in late January, and individual counties are likely to vote on it in February and March.

Several residents said they worry that, even if technology can temper the pollution impact of each trip, the overall increase in shipping will further foul the air. The plan can be viewed at www.metro.net/mcgmap